WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of activating a sorting unit comprising a trolley on which a selectively actuable unloading device is disposed for unloading an item from the trolley in a cross-wise direction relative to a direction of travel of the trolley, the method comprising the steps of:

A) moving the trolley along a path having a plurality of spaced-apart unloading stations,

B) stopping the trolley at a respective unloading station,

C) generating an energy signal at the unloading station and transferring the energy signal to an electronic unit on the trolley by electro-magnetic induction, and

D) causing the electronic unit to actuate the unloading device in response to the transfer of energy in step C.

2. The method according to claim 1 wherein step C comprises the steps of:

a) generating a digital signal in a main handling system, and

b) transmitting the digital signal to an inductor mounted at the respective unloading station, to cause the inductor to generate a magnetic induction field at a selected frequency.

3. The method according to claim 2 further including the step of varying the frequency of the magnetic field for determining a direction of unloading performed by the unloading device.

4. The method according to claim 1 wherein step D comprises actuating an unloading device in the form of an endless conveyor.

5. The method according to claim 1 further comprising reversing the direction of transfer of the energy signal for transmitting information from the trolley to the station.

6. A method of controlling a trolley of a sorting system wherein the trolley travels to respective stations along a path for loading or unloading items in a direction transversely of a direction of travel of the trolley, the positioning the trolley at a respective one of the stations, transmitting a control signal from the station to an electrical unit on the trolley for actuating a mechanism on the trolley, and inverting a direction of the signal back to the station for transferring information from the trolley to the station.

7. A sorting system comprising:

a trolley movable to a selected unloading system, the trolley including an unloading device for unloading an item in a direction,

a main handling mechanism for generating a digital signal,

field-generating means at the unloading station for receiving the digital signal and generating a magnetic field in response thereto, and

field-detecting means disposed on the trolley for detecting the magnetic field and actuating the unloading device in response thereto.

8. The system according to claim 7 wherein the field-generating means constitutes means for generating a magnetic fields at different frequencies for determining a direction of unloading at the trolley.

9. The system according to claim 7 wherein field-generating means comprises an inductor, and the field-receiving means comprises an antenna.

10. The system according to claim 9 wherein the field-detecting means includes means for inverting the magnetic field back to the field-generating means for transmitting information from the trolley to the main handling mechanism.

11. The system according to claim 7 wherein the field-generating means comprises an inductor, and the field-receiving means includes sensors for generating an electrical signal in the presence of a magnetic field.

12. The system according to claim 7 wherein the unloading device comprises an endless conveyor.